A

HANDFUL

OF

LAVENDER

LIZETTE

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A HANDFUL OF LAVENDER

BY

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1893

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The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

TO THE SWEET MEMORY OF

SIDNEY LANIER

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A HANDFUL OF LAVENDER

THE DESERTED HOUSE

THE old house stands deserted, gray,
With sharpened gables high in air,
And deep-set lattices, all gay
With massive arch and framework rare;
And o'er it is a silence laid,
That feeling, one grows sore afraid.

The eaves are dark with heavy vines;
The steep roof wears a coat of moss;
The walls are touched with dim designs
Of shadows moving slow across;
The balconies are damp with weeds,
Lifting as close as streamside reeds.

The garden is a loved retreat
Of melancholy flowers, of lone
And wild-mouthed herbs, in companies sweet,
'Mid desolate green grasses thrown;
And in its gaps the hoar stone wall
Lets sprays of tangled ivy fall.

The pebbled paths drag, here and there,
  Old lichened faces, overspun
With silver spider-threads — they wear
  A silence sad to look upon:
It is so long since happy feet
Made them to thrill with pressure sweet.

'Mid drear but fragrant shrubs there stands
  A saint of old made mute in stone,
With tender eyes and yearning hands,
  And mouth formed in a sorrow lone;
'T is thick with dust, as long ago
'T was thick with fairest blooms that grow.

Swallows are whirring here and there;
  And oft a little soft wind blows
A hundred odors down the air;
  The bees hum 'round the red, last rose;
And ceaselessly the crickets shrill
Their tunes, and yet, it seems so still.

Or else, from out the distance steals,
  Half heard, the tramp of horses, or
The bleak and harsh stir of slow wheels
  Bound cityward; but more and more,
As these are hushed, or yet increase,
About the old house clings its peace.

BETRAYED

HE is false, O Death, she is fair!
Let me hide my head on thy knee;
Blind mine eyes, dull mine ears, O Death!
She hath broke my heart for me!

Give me a perfect dream;
Find me a rare, dim place;
But let not her voice come nigh,
And keep out her face — her face!

A SONG

HE year's a little older grown ;
And fair white boughs by green ways blown
In these new days are no more known.
(Oh, who can bring the May again ?)

And we are wiser grown, we two.
Our story 's told ; each word was true ;
And you love me, and I love you.
(Oh, who can bring the May again ?)
Was it not sweeter ere we knew ?
Yet who can bring the May again ?

HALLOWMAS

OU know, *the year's not always May* —
Oh, once the lilacs were ablow!
(In truth, not very long ago,)
But now, dead leaves drop down the way.

But now, chrysanthemums are gay,
And some last roses redly glow.
You know, *the year's not always May* —
Oh, once the lilacs were ablow!

These be the days, this weather gray,
We think of those we lovëd so;
Sweet souls, who heard Death calling low,
And followed him from dark to day.
You know, *the year's not always May.*

A SPINNING SONG

OW many lilies be ablow?
Count them and see —
Seven by the wall, and seven by the door;
'T is time he came to me.
Oh, love 's bitter!

Was ever a whiter web than this
That I spin to-day?
A wedding gown or a winding sheet,
Love, which shall it be?
Oh, love 's bitter!

The old dames stand in the street,
'Neath the willow trees;
And they mark how white my lilies blow,
And they hear my bees.
Oh, love 's bitter!

And one dame says, "Five lads of mine
Be in the sea;"
Another says, "That lad of mine,
He came not back to me."
Oh, love 's bitter!

The willow trees grow down to the wharves,
  Green as of old;
(Green as the day he went from me;)
  The sea is of gold.
    Oh, love's bitter!

Two ships I see: one in the west —
  Love, is it thine?
One in the east, in a windy mist —
  Oh, love, which is thine?
    Oh, love's bitter!

Then speak the dames: "Her ship went down
  That night at sea."
My seven white lilies — do ye hear?
  For this they speak of me!
    Oh, love's bitter!

MY TRUE LOVE LIES ASLEEP

Y true love lies asleep
In some most heavenly place;
She hath a lily in her hand,
A smile upon her face.

The dear white roses come
And climb about her there;
The sweetest winds you ever heard
Go singing down the air.

The roses climb so high;
The grasses grow so deep;
You cannot see her where she lies,
A-smiling in her sleep.

ANNE

SUDBURY MEETING-HOUSE, 1653.

HER eyes be like the violets,
Ablow in Sudbury lane;
When she doth smile, her face is sweet
As blossoms after rain;
With grief I think of my gray hairs,
And wish me young again.

In comes she through the dark old door
Upon this Sabbath day;
And she doth bring the tender wind
That sings in bush and tree;
And hints of all the apple boughs
That kissed her by the way.

Our parson stands up straight and tall,
For our dear souls to pray,
And of the place where sinners go,
Some grewsome things doth say;
Now, she is highest Heaven to me;
So Hell is far away.

Most stiff and still the good folk sit
To hear the sermon through;
But if our God be such a God,
And if these things be true,
Why did He make her then so fair,
And both her eyes so blue?

A flickering light, the sun creeps in,
And finds her sitting there;
And touches soft her lilac gown,
And soft her yellow hair;
I look across to that old pew,
And have both praise and prayer.

Oh, violets in Sudbury lane,
Amid the grasses green,
This maid who stirs ye with her feet
Is far more fair, I ween!
I wonder how my forty years
Look by her sweet sixteen!

A WET JUNE DAY

CENTS, sounds, as of November fill the air:
Of myriad blossoms down wet pathways strown;
Of ragged leaves off steaming branches blown
And dropped into dank hollows here and there.
Keen little gusts go whirling through the hush,
Driving the mist before them up the lane.
And lo, the lovely world grows ours again! —
The orchard fences, the one elder bush,
Prone with its white face in the thick drenched grass,
The rows of apple-trees, gnarled, dripping, sweet,
The highway with its pools agleam like glass;
Then, as still speeds the mist on shining feet,
Meadow, and wood, peaked roofs — beyond them shows
A windy west, the color of a rose.

THE OLD PATH

LOVE! O love! this way has hints of you
In every bough that stirs, in every bee,
Yellow and glad, droning the thick grass through;
In blooms red on the bush, white on the tree:
And when the wind, just now, came soft and fleet,
Scattering the blackberry blossoms, and from some
Fast darkening space that thrush sang sudden sweet,
You were so near, so near, yet did not come!
Say, is it thus with you, O friend, this day?
Have you, for me that love you, thought or word?
Do I, with bud or bough, pass by your way;
With any breath of brier, or note of bird?
If this I knew, though you be quick or dead,
All my sad life would I go comforted.

A SONG FOR CANDLEMAS

THERE'S never a rose upon the bush,
And never a bud on any tree;
In wood and field nor hint nor sign
Of one green thing for you or me.
Come in, come in, sweet love of mine,
And let the bitter weather be!

Coated with ice the garden wall;
The river reeds are stark and still;
The wind goes plunging to the sea,
And last week's flakes the hollows fill.
Come in, come in, sweet love, to me,
And let the year blow as it will!

SUNRISE

HE east is yellow as a daffodil.
Three steeples — three stark swarthy arms — are thrust
Up from the town. The gnarlëd poplars thrill
Down the long street in some keen salty gust —
Straight from the sea and all the sailing ships —
Turn white, black, white again, with noises sweet
And swift. Back to the night the last star slips.
High up the air is motionless, a sheet
Of light. The east grows yellower apace,
And trembles : then, once more, and suddenly,
The salt wind blows, and in that moment's space
Flame roofs, and poplar-tops, and steeples three ;
From out the mist that wraps the river-ways,
The little boats, like torches, start ablaze.

KEATS

LUTING and singing, with young locks aflow,
This lad, forsooth, down the long years should pass,
With scent of blooms, with daffodils arow,
Lighting their candles in the April grass.
Ah, 't is not thus he comes to us, but sweet
With youth and sorrows! When we speak his name,
Lo, the old house in the old foreign street,
His broken voice lamenting that his fame
(Alack, he knew not!) passing fleet would be!
He grieves us with his melancholy eyes.
Yet are all weathers sweeter for that he
Did sing. Deep in the Roman dust he lies.
How since he died the century hath sped! —
And they that mocked him, yea, they too are dead.

A THOUGHT OF MAY

LL that long, mad March day, in the dull town,
I had a thought of May — alas, alas!
The dogwood boughs made whiteness up and down;
The daffodils were burning in the grass;
And there were bees astir in lane and street,
And scent of lilacs blowing tall and lush;
While hey, the wind, that pitched its voice so sweet,
It seemed an angel talked behind each bush!
The west grew very golden, roofs turned black.
I saw one star above the gables bare.
The door flew open. Love, you had come back.
I held my arms; you found the old way there.
In its old place you laid your yellow head,
And at your kiss the mad March weather fled!

DOUBT

REEDS grow so thick along the way,
Their boughs hide God; I cannot pray.

TRUTH

HE old faiths light their candles all about,
But burly Truth comes by and blows them out.

A DECEMBER ROSE

ROSE is a rose all times of the year.
I have one out in my garden there,
In the deep grass out by the gray old stair —
A breath of June in December drear.

Ah, but its red is a little sere,
And nipped by the frost in last night's air!
A rose is a rose all times of the year.
I have one out in my garden there.

So, when Love comes, he is counted dear,
With his reed at his lips, in June-tide fair,
A-piping sweet, or with wind-blown hair,
And tears in his eyes in December drear.
A rose is a rose all times of the year.

A SONG

H, Love, he went a-straying,
A long time ago!
I missed him in the Maying,
When blossoms were of snow;
So back I came by the old sweet way;
And for I loved him so,
I wept that he came not with me,
A long time ago!

Wide open stood my chamber door,
And one stepped forth to greet;
Gray Grief, strange Grief, who turned me sore
With words he spake so sweet.
I gave him meat; I gave him drink;
(And listened for Love's feet.)
How many years? I cannot think;
In truth, I do not know —
Ah, long time ago!

Oh, Love, he came not back again,
Although I kept me fair;
And each white May, in field and lane,
I waited for him there!

Yea, he forgot ; but Grief stayed on,
And in Love's empty chair
Doth sit and tell of days long gone —
'T is more than I can bear!

MID-MARCH

T is too early for white boughs, too late
For snows. From out the hedge the wind lets fall
A few last flakes, ragged and delicate.
Down the stripped roads the maples start their small,
Soft, 'wildering fires. Stained are the meadow stalks
A rich and deepening red. The willow-tree
Is woolly. In deserted garden-walks
The lean bush crouching hints old royalty,
Feels some June stir in the sharp air and knows
Soon 't will leap up and show the world a rose.

The days go out with shouting; nights are loud;
Wild, warring shapes the wood lifts in the cold:
The moon 's a sword of keen, barbaric gold,
Plunged to the hilt into a pitch black cloud.

THE SINGER

ITH spices, wines, and silken stuffs,
The stout ship sailëd down,
And with the ship the singer came
Unto the old sea town.

'Peace to ye!" quoth the sailor folk,
"A month and more have we
Been listening to his songs. Ah, God!
None sings so sweet as he."

Up from the wharves the salt wind blew,
And filled the steep highway;
Seven slender plum trees caught the sun
Within a courtyard gray.

Out came the daughter of the king;
Oh, very fair was she!
She was the whitest bough a-grow,
So fair, so fair was she!

The singer sang, "My love," he sang,
"Is like a white plum-tree!"
Then silence fell on house and court;
No other word sang he.

The king's daughter, when she was old,
Sat in a broidered gown,
And spun the flax from her fair fields —
Oh, it was sweet in town!

Seven plum-trees stood down in the court,
Each one was white as milk;
The king's daughter rose softly there,
Rustling her broidered silk.

"Oh, set the wheel away, my maids,
And sing that song to me
The singer sang!" "My love," sang they,
"Is like a white plum-tree!"

SWEET WEATHER

OW blow the daffodils on slender stalks,
Small, keen, quick flames that leap up in the mould,
And run along the dripping garden-walks :
Swallows come whirring back to chimneys old.

Blown by the wind, the pear-tree's flakes of snow
Lie heaped in the thick grasses of the lane ;
And all the sweetness of the Long Ago
Sounds in that song the thrush sends through the rain.

IN JUNE

With a difference. — HAMLET.

HO saw the June come? Wel-a-day!
My neighbor's bushes, one and all,
And grew white after God's old way,
Behind the garden wall.

Who saw the June come? Nay, not she,
My neighbor's daughter, slim and shy,
Long since she left her father's house,
Ere yet the rose was nigh.

Last year, last year, there in the sun
She stood and smiled. I did not know
Which was the whitest thing in June,
She, or that bush a-grow.

But now; ah, now; yea, now 't is plain!
When folk be dead, how wise we be!
God's boughs were black beside her snów;
Ah, now; yea, now I see!

My neighbor's bushes blow, blow, blow,
And blow about his silent door!

Ye call that white? Nay, 't is not so;
June has been here before.

Ye cannot mock me, blossoms sweet;
I know too well your looks of yore;
My neighbor knows (yet blow, blow, blow),
June has been here before.

AFTER THE RAIN

RIPPING the hollyhocks beneath the wall,
Their fires half quenched, a smouldering red ;
A shred of gold upon the grasses tall,
A butterfly is hanging dead.

A sound of trickling waters, like a tune
Set to sweet words ; a wind that blows
Wet boughs against a saffron sky ; all June
Caught in the breath of one white rose.

A RHYME OF DEATH'S INN

RHYME of good Death's inn!
My love came to that door;
And she had need of many things,
The way had been so sore.

My love she lifted up her head,
"And is there room?" said she;
"There was no room in Bethlehem's inn
For Christ who died for me."

But said the keeper of the inn,
"His name is on the door."
My love then straightway entered there:
She hath come back no more.

THE DEATH POTION

In Italy, 15—.

NE drop of this, and she will not know
If she be foul or fair;
One drop, and I may bind him again
With a thread of my golden hair.
(*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

I would that those folk across the street,
In old St. Simon's there,
Would hush their noise: for they sing so sweet
They make this rare drop seem less rare.
(*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

It is May; my plum-trees five
Down in the court below
Look like five little chorister boys
Tiptoe to chant, so white they blow.
(*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

And a butterfly like a violet
Flits through the sun and lights on the sill
Close to my hand. Are the bees about,
Or is it the wind comes down the hill?
(*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

But what have *I* to do with the May,
  Or any other weather?
Or with five white plum-trees? Hate and I,
  And I and Hell, be yoked together.
    (*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

(One drop is sure to kill.) When she dies,
  They will put the cross on her breast,
And get the golden candlesticks out
  For her head and feet, and call her blest.
    (*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

But she is a thief! Do ye hear me in Heaven?
  Her soul shall *not* come in
To those white souls. She is pitch, not snow.
  Saint Simon, Saint Simon, is Theft not sin?
    (*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

For he was mine, and I was his;
    (*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)
Though we had shame, yet had we bliss.
    (*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

I fell, but for love, love, love;
  And for love, love, love, I swear!
I, for this man and my love,
  Would have wiped his feet with my hair!
    (*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

This robber came; she lay in wait;
  She sprang upon him unaware;

He thinks to wed her with a ring
To-morrow in St. Simon's there.
(*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

One drop? *And she shall have it then*
In a sup of her lover's wine;
So — old things will come back again,
And I be his, and he be mine!
(*Hear, Lord Jesus!*)

BLACKBERRY BLOSSOMS

ONG sunny lane and pike, white, delicate,
The blackberry blossoms are ablow, ablow,
Hiding the rough-hewn rails 'neath drift of snow,
Fresh-fallen, late. The opening pasture gate
Brushes a hundred of them loose, and shakes
Them down into the tall delicious grass:
Sometimes a little sudden wind doth pass,
And all the air is full of flying flakes.
It seems but yesterday they blew as sweet
Down old school ways, and thrilled me with delight;
And reaching out for them, I heard the fleet,
Glad creek go spinning o'er its pebbles bright.
Ah, well! Ah, me! Even now, long as they last,
I am a child again; Joy holds me fast.

SUNSET

N the clear dusk upon the fields below,
The blossoming thorn-bush, white, and spare, and tall,
Seems carved of ivory 'gainst the dark wall:
Shut from the sunset sharp the farm-roofs show.
But here upon this height, the straggling hedge
Burns in the wind, and is astir with bees;
The little pool beneath the willow trees,
Yellow as topaz flames from edge to edge;
A line of light the deserted highway glows.
Odors like sounds down the rich air do pass,
Spice from each bough, musk from the brier rose
Dropping its five sweet petals on the grass.
Swallows are whirring black against the blaze;
I hear the creek laugh out from pebbly ways.

THE DEAD SHIP

A Keltic Legend.

HE ship came sâiling, sailing,
Into our old town —
My love combed out her golden hair;
It fell to the hem of her gown.
Oh, my heart, break!

No master and no crew was hers,
A ship of the dead was she,
And sailing, sailing, sailing —
The folk ran out to see.
Oh, my heart, break!

And first they said nor yea, nor nay;
Then some began to weep;
And some did count their little lads,
As a shepherd counts his sheep.
Oh, my heart, break!

Oh, sailing, sailing, sailing —
"Whom will it be?" said they;
"She never sails to this our town
But one doth go away."
Oh, my heart, break!

"Yea, one will go from this our town
And come back nevermore;
Whate'er His will, Lord God is good;"
Thus I at my love's door.
Oh, my heart, break!

Thereat I turned into the house
And climbed up my love's stair,
And called her softly — through the dusk
I saw her golden hair.
Oh, my heart, break!

Who went away from our old town
And came back nevermore?
It was my love; she lay there dead
Upon the chamber floor.
Oh, my heart, break!

A RHYME FOR JUNE

NOW marshy pools on the road's edge,
Or creeks that slip 'twixt banks of sedge,
With marigolds be set aflare;
And not a corner south or north,
But there a brier-rose breaks forth,
And bees go droning down the air.

The bramble now begins to blow,
The elder-bush puts on its snow,
And birds be sweet till fall of dew;
And when my love and I go out,
So thick the grass grows all about —
In truth, it scarce will let us through.

AUGUST

O wind, no bird. The river flames like brass.
On either side, smitten as with a spell
Of silence, brood the fields. In the deep grass,
Edging the dusty roads, lie as they fell
Handfuls of shriveled leaves from tree and bush.
But 'long the orchard fence and at the gate,
Thrusting their saffron torches through the hush,
Wild lilies blaze, and bees hum soon and late.
Rust-colored the tall straggling brier, not one
Rose left. The spider sets its loom up there
Close to the roots, and spins out in the sun
A silken web from twig to twig. The air
Is full of hot rank scents. Upon the hill
Drifts the noon's single cloud, white, glaring, still.

EARLY SEPTEMBER

HE swallows have not left us yet, praise God!
And bees still hum, and gardens hold the musk
Of white rose and of red; firing the dusk
By the old wall, the hollyhocks do nod,
And pinks that send the sweet East down the wind.
And yet, a yellowing leaf shows here and there
Among the boughs, and through the smoky air —
That hints the frost at dawn — the wood looks thinned.
The little half-grown sumachs, all as green
As June last week, now in the crackling sedge,
Colored like wine, burn to the water's edge.
We feel, at times, as we had come unseen
Upon the aging Year, sitting apart,
Grief in his eyes, some ache at his great heart.

A NOVEMBER AFTERNOON

THE long and sad week's wind, like any child,
Has sobbed itself to sleep. This morning's rain
Has strewn the stairway with the petals wild,
Red, ragged, of my sweet last rose. The lane
Shows me the poplar tree, blackened and bare,
Clasped to its heart a dangling empty nest.
A few dull yellow leaves stir here and there,
And all the air is clear from east to west.
The year, I think, lies dreaming of the May,
As old men dream of youth, that loved, lost thing.
A spring-like thrill is in this weather gray.
I wait to hear some thrush begin to sing;
And half expect, as up and down I go,
To see my neighbor's cherry-boughs ablow!

THE FIRST SNOW

HE dogwood has its bloom again ;
Each blade of grass out in the lane
A little scentless bud doth bear ;
The shriveled shrubs to left and right
Let loose a myriad petals light
To every breath that stirs the air.

Still as in June its briers beneath
The meadow brook shows its white teeth.
Remembering June, the wild rose-bush
Holds still a berry here and there,
Setting the blackened twigs aflare
With scarlet in the frosty hush.

Long are the hours from dusk to dawn ;
From dawn to dusk — ah, too soon gone !
Lo, when the brief day sinks to rest,
Then bough by bough, like bone by bone,
The naked trees stand out alone
Against the keen gold of the west !

TO HER SWEET EYES

WEET eyes, sweet eyes, that now be in the dust,
When *you* I had, the May was May in truth!
The round world wore its white as youth did youth,
Sweet eyes, sweet eyes, that now be in the dust!
Of its old music is the wind's throat bare;
June is not June; the rose hath lost its red,
The pink its spice; the hollyhock is dead;
There are no lilies blowing anywhere —
And yet, I came upon a grave to-day,
By a church door, and there a thorn-bush stood,
Astir with bees, abrim with blossoms gay,
The one fair thing of field and hedge and wood.
You lay beneath, sweet eyes, sweet eyes and true,
And it was fair because, because of you!

LYDIA

REAK forth, break forth, O Sudbury town,
And bid your yards be gay
Up all your gusty streets and down,
For Lydia comes to-day!

I hear it on the wharves below;
And if I buy or sell,
The good folk as they churchward go
Have only this to tell.

My mother, just for love of her,
Unlocks her carvëd drawers;
And sprigs of withered lavender
Drop down upon the floors.

For Lydia's bed must have the sheet
Spun out of linen sheer,
And Lydia's room be passing sweet
With odors of last year.

The violet flags are out once more
In lanes salt with the sea;

The thorn-bush at Saint Martin's door
  Grows white for such as she.

So Sudbury, bid your gardens blow,
  For Lydia comes to-day;
Of all the words that I do know,
  I have but this to say.

DAFFODILS

ATHERED by March, the daffodils are here.
First, all the air grew keen with yesterday,
And once a thrush from out some hollow gray
On a field's edge, where whitening stalks made cheer,
Fluted the last unto the budding year;
Now, that the wind lets loose from orchard spray
Plum bloom and peach bloom down the dripping way,
Their punctual gold through the wet blades they rear.
Oh, fleet and sweet! A light to all that pass
Below, in the cramped yard, close to the street,
Long-stemmed one flames behind the palings bare,
The whole of April in a tuft of grass.
Scarce here, soon will it be — oh, sweet and fleet! —
Gone like a snatch of song upon the stair.

THAT DAY YOU CAME

UCH special sweetness was about
That day God sent you here,
I knew the lavender was out,
And it was mid of year.

Their common way the great winds blew,
The ships sailed out to sea ;
Yet ere that day was spent I knew
Mine own had come to me.

As after song some snatch of tune
Lurks still in grass or bough,
So, somewhat of the end o' June
Lurks in each weather now.

The young year sets the buds astir,
The old year strips the trees ;
But ever in my lavender
I hear the brawling bees.

THE LAST CRICKET

EY, piper, in the lean gray grass,
The crackling blades o' Hallowmas,
Ho, piper, sooth to hear!
Pipe me the sweetest thing I know,
(Save Yesterday), — aye, at it so! —
The last rose of the year!

Yet hold, my little piper there!
The wind has blown the brier bare,
That mocked us so with June.
They twain are gone the selfsame way —
The red last rose and Yesterday —
What else is worth a tune?

Quick, pipe me, pipe this weather fleet,
The bitter of it and the sweet;
Pipe me the coming snows;
The ragged nest upon the wall;
Pipe me the saddest of them all,
The year without a rose!

GUINEVERE IN ALMESBURY CONVENT

HE pores the missal on her knee,
Or, haply as she climbs the stair,
Some sound, some odor sets her free,
From the long days of fast and prayer;
And all about comes Camelot.

At dusk she walks her garden gray,
And hears the nightingales without,
Maddening the marsh with Yesterday;
And straight — an alien dusk about,
And a hoarse word the king is not!

Clamor and dusk in Camelot!
She speeding from the palace forth,
By river-path and orchard plot,
Toward the tall convent in the north,
Set in its apple-trees apart.

She paces thus, and starts to find
Her Almesbury lilies at her feet,
Her nuns grown shadowy behind,
And nightingales that sing so sweet
The marsh is fain to break its heart!

BEFORE THE RAIN

HE poplar shows its white teeth to the gust
Driven out the east and up the still highway;
The alders bow like reeds. A cloud of dust
Whirls by, and with it scents from hollows gray,
Scents from a hundred fields, the petals fair
Of blossoming brambles by the fence a-row.
The wind passes, and lo, each bush is bare!
There at the gate, the one rose late agrow
Lies in the path, a little quaking heap
Of crimson leaves. The lily there is now
A little snow blown through the grasses deep.
Light airs and gentle sounds haunt blade and bough;
Then, in the silence following again,
Fall sudden-sweet great drops of silver rain.

LOVE, WEEPING, LAID THIS SONG

ON A COPY OF THE ILIAD FOUND WITH THE MUMMY OF A YOUNG GIRL.

O ! an old song, yellow with centuries !
She, she who with her young dust kept it sweet ;
She, in some green court on a carvëd seat,
Read it at dusk fair-paged upon her knees ;
And, looking up, saw there, beyond the trees,
Tall Helen through the darkling shadows fleet ;
And heard, out in the fading river-street,
The roar of battle like the roar of seas.
Love, weeping, laid this song when she was dead
In that sealed chamber, strange with nard and musk.
Outliving Egypt, see it here at last.
We touch its leaves : back rush the seasons sped ;
For us, as once for her, in that old dusk,
Troy trembles like a reed before the blast !

LORD, OFT I COME

ORD, oft I come unto Thy door,
But when Thou openest it to me,
Back to the dark I shrink once more,
Away from light and Thee.

Lord, oft some gift of Thee I pray;
Thou givest bread of finest wheat;
Empty I turn upon my way,
Counting a stone more sweet.

Thou bid'st me speed; then sit I still;
Thou bid'st me stay; then do I go;
Lord, make me Thine in deed and will,
And ever keep me so!

THE TOWN IN FEBRUARY

E who turns laneward these dear, subtle days
Sees the stripped, swarthy brake tiptoe to bloom,
While overhead the voyaging crows make gloom,
And stir with husky notes the windless ways.
Even here, a glittering thread through the walled maze
Runs some fair hint of spring ; oft falls a hush,
And we do half believe we hear some thrush
Sing ghostly sweet within the shifting haze.
The dusk is later, earlier the dawn,
And the shrill, lengthy nights that fret us so
Are briefer grown ; the old calms come once more.
The time is April's with the bitter gone.
And yet, just out of sight whirls the last snow,
And all of March halts at the very door.

HESTER

My sprightly neighbor. — CHARLES LAMB.

IMPLED of cheek and grave of gown,
A maid of whom this world has dearth,
She walks the streets of that old town,
And makes them mellow with her mirth.

The hoary roofs grow young with cheer,
The windows brighten pane by pane;
And haunted by her laughter dear,
To bud the shriveled boughs are fain.

The painted ladies of the age,
Flaunt past her over-sweet with musk;
But she trips on with scent of sage
Blown out some yard at fall of dusk.

These painted dames of Hester's time —
When they are laid by churchyard doors,
She will laugh on in English rhyme,
And she be known on alien shores.

FOR A FLYLEAF OF HERRICK'S POEMS

N Devon, when the year was new,
For London made he moan;
And all the windy daylight through,
Longed for her walls of stone.

The call of March was naught to him,
For London's rose more shrill;
And blowing sweet, and blowing slim,
Waxed worn the daffodil.

But when the soothing dusk came down,
He knew a mood more kind;
A vision empty of the town
Brake on his restless mind.

Betwixt the lanes and rectory door,
He seemed to lightly pass;
He saw the stalkëd gold once more
Brim all his orchard grass.

Oh, still the air of Devon thrills,
After two centuries long!
For here behold these daffodils
Saved by a snatch of song.

THE GARDEN AT BEMERTON

FOR A FLYLEAF OF HERBERT'S POEMS.

EAR after year, from dusk to dusk,
How sweet this English garden grows!
Steeped in two centuries' sun and musk,
Walled from the world in gray repose,
Harbor of honey-freighted bees,
And wealthy with the rose.

Here pinks with spices in their throats
Nod by the bitter marigold;
Here nightingales with haunting notes,
When west and east with stars are bold,
From out the twisted hawthorn-trees,
Sing back the weathers old.

All tuneful winds do down it pass;
The leaves a sudden whiteness show,
And delicate noises fill the grass;
The only flakes its spaces know
Are petals blown off briers long,
And heaped on blades below.

Ah! dawn and dusk, year after year,
'T is more than these that keeps it rare!
We see the saintly Master here,
Pacing along the alleys fair,
And catch the throbbing of a song
Across the amber air!

A FOGGY AFTERNOON

OUND all the house such ghostly noises go,
As keep us by the fire the dull day through.
On creeps the fog, and blots the ships from view,
Reaches the wharf, and heaps it as with snow,
Till, deep in drifts, the worn gray timbers show;
Till bough by bough vanish the willows few,
And roof by roof the sodden highway too.
Worldless we sit; the noises ghostlier grow.
But once — a break! and there, across the street,
Beneath a tattered awning stands a lad,
With store of purple violets and white.
Two lovers stop to buy his blossoms sweet;
She pins them at her throat, and, slim and glad,
They onward pass, turn spectral, fade from sight.

A SONG OF SEPARATION

THE long, stripped days, the nights void of a kiss,
The streets wherein not any step I take
Brings sound or sight of you, though my heart break,
Yea, the round year — were not my trouble this,
It would be yours, beloved ; one must miss
Honey for gall, and one go unbereft ;
One must be taken and the other left :
I praise God that my bitter is your bliss.
Out of this thought, as out some reed apace,
I draw a faltering music for relief,
Yet sweet enough to make, from door to door,
My empty house a habitable place.
My tears break off : I will have naught of grief,
For I remember you do weep no more.

TOWARD SEPTEMBER

OUCHED in some secret place beside the way,
A cricket makes the sole sound of the noon,
Piping the parched grass full of his keen tune,
All that is left the town of yesterday.
Out in the square the fountains thinly play;
And underneath its cobwebbed hedges strewn,
A hundred shifting sparks of fire and June,
The last rose lies. Upon the pavements gray,
The leaves, new-fallen, crackle as I pass;
Row after row, the silent houses stand,
Fast-barred, a month's dust thick on blind and stair.
At the street's foot, the river flames like brass;
And out beyond the wharves and smoky land,
Tall ships go sailing seaward through the glare.

A WINDFLOWER

HE wind stooped down and wrote a
sweet, small word,
But the snow fell, and all the writing
blurred :
Now, the snow gone, we read it as we pass,—
The wind's word in the grass.

A HAUNTING MEMORY

ILD rockets blew along the lane ;
The tall white gentians too were there ;
The mullein stalks were brave again ;
Of blossoms was the bramble bare ;
And toward the pasture bars below
The cows went by me, tinkling slow.

Straight through the sunset flew a thrush,
And sang the only song he knew,
Perched on a ripening elder bush ;
(Oh, but to give his song its due !)
Sang it, and ceased, and left it there
To haunt bush, blade, and golden air.

Oh, but to make it plain to you !
My words were wrought for grosser stuff ;
To give that lonely tune its due,
Never a word is sweet enough ;
A thing to think on when 't was past,
As is the first rose or the last.

The lad, driving his cows along,
Strode whistling through the windy grass ;

The little pool the shrubs among
Lay like a bit of yellow glass ;
A window in the farmhouse old,
Turned westward, was of glaring gold.

I have forgotten days and days,
And much well worth the holding fast ;
Yet not the look of those green ways,
The bramble with its bloom long past,
The tinkling cows, the scent, the hush —
Still on the elder sings that thrush.

TELL ME SOME WAY

H, you who love me not, tell me some way
Whereby I may forget you for a space ;
Nay, clean forget you and your lovely face —
Yet well I know how vain this prayer I pray.
All weathers hold you. Can I make the May
Forbid her boughs blow white in every place ?
Or rob June of her rose that comes apace ?
Cheat of their charm the elder months and gray ?
Aye, were you dead, you could not be forgot :
So sparse the bloom along the lanes would be ;
Such sweetness out the briery hedges fled ;
My tears would fall that you had loved me not,
And bitterer tears that you had gone from me ;
Living, you break my heart, so would you dead !

THE HAWTHORN TREE IN YORK LANE

THE thought of it comes to my mind,
As through the town I go,
And all the houses slip behind
To let my hawthorn blow.

The little lads troop through the grass
To fill their hands with bloom;
A single petal in a glass
Makes Sussex in a room.

Kinless and strange on the road's edge,
Such art its blossoms hold,
The sprawling fence becomes a hedge,
The new world is the old.

Who walks at dusk in green York Lane,
A certain week of May,
Hears music pour and pour again
Down that enchanted way.

He knows the nightingale is out,
Singing in the old wise;
While white as morning all about,
A hundred thorn-trees rise.

There in York Lane it blows and blows;
And I am stripped of cares;
One thought of it, and the town grows
Brimful of Sussex airs.

ONE NIGHT

ONE lily scented all the dark. It grew
Down the drenched walk a spike of ghostly white.
Fine, sweet, sad noises thrilled the tender night,
From insects couched on blades that dripped with dew.
The road beyond, cleaving the great fields through,
Echoed no footstep ; like a streak of light,
The gaunt and blossoming elder gleamed in sight.
The boughs began to quake, and warm winds blew,
And whirled a myriad petals down the air.
An instant, peaked and black the old house stood ;
The next, its gables showed a tremulous gray,
Then deepening gold ; the next, the world lay bare !
The moon slipped out the leash of the tall wood,
And through the heavenly meadows fled away.

IMMORTALITY

ATTLES nor songs can from oblivion save,
But Fame upon a white deed loves to build;
From out that cup of water Sidney gave,
Not one drop has been spilled.

THE CLOSING YEAR

HEN chimneys no more music hold,
For that the swallows all are gone;
When winds be salty, blowing cold
From sailing ships and the wet dawn;
When briers where the rose was bold,
On blackened twigs show berries sere,
Then oh, my love, and hey, my love,
The closing o' the year!

When gusts die down, and lanes grow still,
And the old weather comes once more;
When stiffening stalks begin to thrill,
And twisted boughs bud at the door;
When for some sweet space on the hill,
White as long since the thorn-bush blows,
Then oh, my love, and hey, my love,
The year is at the close!

A DEAD ROSE IN AN OLD BOOK

O Anne in town, at rainy Hallowmas,
Poring, wide-eyed, sad Dante by the fire,
One brought me, dripping, from a country brier.
The old scent 's in me yet, and will not pass.
Between these leaves of leather and dulled brass,
Just yesterday he found me as he read,
And brake his heart for that we both were dead,
I in this book and she beneath the grass.
A crumbling handful in a corner thrust,
A little flame blown out this many a year,
Behold me now! But ah, that afternoon
At Beauty's throat! Love overwept my dust.
And not a rose in distant lanes or near,
Grudge I its red or any sweet of June.

AN OLD SONG

When you are very old. — RONSARD TO HIS LADY.

SET my reed against my lips and blow,
From out the sunset and the thick of May,
The tune that in my throat has throbbed all day,
To you, upon your terrace pacing slow.
Listen, it is the sweetest tune I know;
In the last light a little longer stay;
Soon will I break and fling my reed away,
And stripped of song forever from you go.
Listen, I pipe you some December sere,
The bough without the bloom, noons dark with rain,
You old, I dead, the sharp wind at the door.
Ah, how these notes will haunt that aging year!
The brier will blossom by your walls again;
And you grow young, and I alive once more.

APRIL WEATHER

H, hush, my heart, and take thine ease,
For here is April weather!
The daffodils beneath the trees
Are all a-row together.

The thrush is back with his old note;
The scarlet tulip blowing;
And white — ay, white as my love's throat —
The dogwood boughs are growing.

The lilac bush is sweet again;
Down every wind that passes,
Fly flakes from hedgerow and from lane;
The bees are in the grasses.

And Grief goes out, and Joy comes in,
And Care is but a feather;
And every lad his love can win,
For here is April weather.

RACHEL

O days that dawn can match for her
The days before her house was bare;
Sweet was the whole year with the stir
Of young feet on the stair.

Once was she wealthy with small cares,
And small hands clinging to her knees;
Now is she poor, and, weeping, bears
Her strange, new hours of ease.

IN SORROW'S HOUR

HE brambles blow without you, — at the door
They make late April, — and the brier too
Buds its pale rose for other folk than you;
In the deep grass the gentian too once more
Heaps its sweet snow; and the keen marigold
With its small fire sets the walled walks aflare.
Like flakes of flame blown down the gray, still air,
The cardinal-flower is out in thickets old.
Oh, love! oh, love! what road is yours to-day?
For I would follow after, see your face,
Put my hand in your hand, feel the dear grace
Of hair, mouth, eyes, hear the brave words you say.
The dark is void, and all the daylight vain.
Oh, that you were but here with me again!

EACH TIME THE WIND BLOWS

ACH time the wind blows, up I look and see
A swarm of blossoms rising in the air,
And of its week-old flakes the hedge left bare,
And apple-boughs deserted by the bee,
And the one tardy-blossomed, slim peach-tree
Blown like a flame against the stone wall there.
But nay, not you; still empty climbs the stair.
Yet, by sure signs the new year gives to me, —
By daffodils aging upon their stalks;
By purple of the lilac turning gray;
And by the last of bloom the long day through
Heaped in the roads, and whitening all the walks, —
Full well I know you speeding this dear way.
Can June return once more, and, sweet, not you?

DRIVING HOME THE COWS

THE creek flames and the stunted willows all.
The lad, driving his cows through the last light,
Sees the one elder, newly budded white,
Flush like a rose behind the pasture wall.
Waist deep in gathering mist the briers tall
By the choked pool show spectral to the sight.
Caught in their flying flakes he climbs the height,
Out to the lane keen with the water's brawl.
Boughs stir; late, noisy bees buzz homeward there,
Packed with the wealth of honey-hearted weeds.
From cobwebbed thorn a wren, as he goes by,
A single burst of song sends down the air.
Tinkling, the cows troop through the gusty reeds;
Black stands the barn against a flawless sky.

A GOOD DEED

GOOD deed knows nor age nor winding-sheet;
The centuries find and leave it quick and sweet;
Even the miser is rememberëd
By that one time he gave the beggar bread.

A PASSING MOOD

OU say not that you love me, yet 't is so.
Your mood is such the days in April wear,
Driving their last flakes down the ashen air,
And yet with all their buds ready to blow;
Aye, with full-blossomed stalks in many a row,
Purpling the grass beneath the hedges bare.
Therefore I wait. As sure as April fair,
Grown bolder, knows its boughs bear bloom, not snow;
So you, who halt betwixt the old and new,
Will know your life's sweet, settled weather come,
And marvel how the blessed thing befell —
How love from out the chill of friendship grew.
Ah, then no longer, love, will you keep dumb;
Caught to my heart you must your secret tell.

APRIL IN TOWN

STRAIGHT from the east the wind blows sharp with rain,
That just now drove its wild ranks down the street,
And westward rushed into the sunset sweet.
Spouts brawl, boughs drip and cease and drip again,
Bricks gleam ; keen saffron glows each window-pane,
And every pool beneath the passing feet.
Innumerable odors fine and fleet
Are blown this way from blossoming lawn and lane.
Wet roofs show black against a tender sky ;
The almond bushes in the lean-fenced square,
Beaten to the walks, show all their draggled white.
A troop of laborers comes slowly by ;
One bears a daffodil, and seems to bear
A new-lit candle through the fading light.

KEATS

THOUGH bitter weathers empty boughs of tune,
And southward send the thrush till days grow long,
This nightingale, December-tide or June,
Floods two worlds with his song.

HEROISM

HETHER we climb, whether we plod,
Space for one task the scant years lend —
To choose some path that leads to God,
And keep it to the end.

RENUNCIATION

OOSE hands and part: I am not she you sought,
The fair one whom in all your dreams you see,
But something more of earth and less than she,
That crowded her an instant from your thought.
Blameless we face the fate this hour has brought.
Unwitting I took hers; I set you free
From all that you unwitting gave to me;
Seek her and find her; I do grudge her naught.
Love, after daylight, dark; so there is left
This season stripped of you; but yet I know,
Remembering the old, I cannot make
These new days bitter or myself bereft.
I know, O love, that I do love you so,
While peace is yours my true heart cannot break!

DOLLY'S FAN

PAINT Anastasia as a saint;
Priscilla as a Puritan,
Holding long lily stalks; but paint
Dear Dolly with a fan!

It is a page wherefrom we read
Each word she has to say;
Learn who may come, and who must speed,
And who may near her stay.

It is a wall as stout as stone,
Where sweet and cold of face,
When in the mood she sits alone
Behind its frill of lace.

'T is covered thick with blossoms small,
Red-tinted like the morn;
And he who 'd dare to scale that wall
Would find each rose a thorn.

Ah, Dolly, Dolly! we confess,
Amongst us all there 's not a man,
But knows he 's loved a *little less*
Than your quaint silken fan!

MAY AND HALLOWMAS

I.

LACK in the fading light
Rose the old house I knew;
A plum-tree, here and there in white,
Upon the terrace grew.

A wind came from the sea,
And shook the blossoms down,
And all of May was blown to me;
I heard the clamoring town.

Caught in the petaled snow,
You stood upon the stair,
The darkening garden-walks below,
The sunset in the air.

II.

Betwixt green leaf and brown
What yesterdays are pent!
This sunset through the clamoring town,
That self-same way I went.

About me everywhere
Lurked some vague smack of spring;

And looked the stripped plum-branches there
  Ready for blossoming.

There, in the terrace grass,
  The old year seemed the new;
Yet, in the whole of Hallowmas,
  I had no sign of you.

A CHESAPEAKE MARSH

ILLOWS and willows in two gust-worn rows,
The fading sunset and the marsh between;
A road beneath where little pools lie keen
At twisted roots, and faint the late light glows.
The yellowing leaves flame down each wind that blows,
And choke the pools and heap the rushes lean.
Wheels rumble; up the road a cart is seen;
White in a whirl of dust it lumbering shows.
Eastward, beyond the wall of gust-worn trees,
A rotting boat drawn up among the reeds;
Creeks that past foggy alders blazing slip;
Salt scents; the stir of solitary bees;
A startled bird that shoreward clamoring speeds;
And leagues of water empty of a ship.

THOMAS À KEMPIS

ROTHER of mine, good monk with cowlëd head,
Walled from that world which thou hast long since fled,
And pacing thy green close beyond the sea,
I send my heart to thee.

Down gust-sweet walks, bordered by lavender,
While eastward, westward, the mad swallows whir,
All afternoon poring thy missal fair,
Serene thou pacest there.

Mixed with the words and fitting like a tune,
Thou hearest distantly the voice of June.
The little, gossiping noises in the grass,
The bees that come and pass.

Fades the long day; the pool behind the hedge
Burns like a rose within the windy sedge;
The lilies ghostlier grow in the dim air;
The convent windows flare.

Yet still thou lingerest; from pastures steep,
Past the barred gate the shepherd drives his sheep;

A nightingale breaks forth, and for a space
Makes sweeter the sweet place.

Then the gray monks by hooded twos and threes
Move chapelward beneath the flaming trees;
Closing thy book, back by the alleys fair
Thou followest to prayer.

Born to these brawling days, this work-sick age,
Oft long I for thy simpler heritage;
A thought of thee is like a breath of bloom
Blown through a noisy room.

For thou art quick, not dead. I picture thee
Forever in that close beyond the sea;
And find, despite this weather's headlong stir,
Peace and a comforter.

KING OLAF'S LILIES

IVE lilies pulled King Olaf,
And climbed the chamber stair;
"These lilies for my Thyri be,
At her white throat to wear."

The tears were in Queen Thyri's eyes,
When he came through the door;
She took the blossoms that he brought,
And flung them on the floor.

"I weep, O King, for my lost lands;
My meadows by the sea;
The steepled streets of that old town,
Where I was wont to be!

"And is it lands or lilies, King,
That be more fair to see?
Go forth and battle with my kin,
And get them back for me."

"Give me one kiss from thy red mouth,"
Said Olaf, Norway's king;
"And all my ships shall sail away,
Thy lost lands back to bring."

Oh, then she kissed him! Out he strode,
Loud clanged the heavy door.
The five white lilies withered there,
Upon the chamber floor.

ELIZABETH

LIZABETH, alack, Elizabeth!
Your lovely lilies blow,
Slim, love, still, love, beside the echoing stair.
The bees have found them out. Row after row
Your pinks, those little blossoms with a breath
Blown from the east, and out the spice-trees there,
Nod up the paths; and roses white as death,
And roses red as love, grow everywhere;
For June is at the door.
Alack, alack, alack, Elizabeth!
Sweeter than June, why do you come no more?

A SELLER OF HERBS

(A RHYME OF A BALTIMORE MARKET)

BLACK, comely, of abiding cheer,
Three times a week she fares,
Townward from gabled Windermere,
To sell her dainty wares.

Green balms she brings from winding lanes,
And some in handfuls tall,
Of the old days of Annes and Janes
Grown by a kitchen wall.

Keen mint has she in dewy sprigs,
With spears of violet;
And the spiced bloom of elder-twigs
In a field's hollow set.

My snatch of May I get from her,
In white buds off a tree;
June in one whiff of lavender,
That breaks my heart for me.

The swaying boughs of Windermere,
Each gust that takes the grass,

High over the town roar I hear,
When that old stall I pass.

What homely memories are mine,
At sight of her quaint stalks;
Of grave dusks mellowing like wine
Down long, box-bordered walks;

Of garret windows eastward thrust,
Of rafters showing dim,
And heaped with herbs as gray as dust,
All scented to the brim.

This lady of the market-place,
Three times a week and more,
I pray her seasons thick with grace;
And ever at her door,

Shut from the road by wall of stone,
And ample cherry-trees,
A garden fair as Herrick's own,
And just as full of bees!

COMPENSATION

LL day I bar you from my slightest thought;
Make myself clear of you or any mark
Of our wrecked dawn and the uprising lark;
Am stern and strong, and do the thing I ought.
Yet ever are there moments with you fraught:
I hear you like some glad sound in the dark;
You wait like bloom outside my branches stark;
I dare not heed; else were my fight unfought.
But when the clamor and the heat are done,
And spent with both I come unto that door,
Sleep opens for me every setting sun,
The bitter lies behind, the sweet before.
We that are twain by day, at night are one.
A dream can bring me to your arms once more.

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